

THE MAN ON THE BOX

By HAROLD MacGRATH

Author of "The Gray Cloak," "The Puppet Crown,"

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CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN ON THE BOX.

At 11:30 he locked up his book and took to his room the mysterious bundle which he had purloined from the stables. It contained the complete livery of a groom. The clothes fitted rather snugly, especially across the shoulders. He stood before the pier-glass, and a complacent (not to say roguish) smile flitted across his face. The black half-boots, the white dogskin breeches, the brown brass-buttoned frock, and the white hat with the brown cockade.

Well, my word for it, he was the handsomest Jehu Washington ever turned out. With a grin he touched his hat to the reflection in the glass, and burst out laughing. His face was as smooth as a baby's for he had generously sacrificed his beard.

I can hear him saying to himself: "Lord, but this is a lark! I'll have to take another Scotch to screw up the edge of my nerve. Won't the boys laugh when they hear how I stirred the girls' frizzes? We'll have a little party here when they all get home. It's a good joke."

Mr. Robert did not prove much of a prophet. Many days were to pass ere he reentered his brother's house.

He stole quietly from the place. He hadn't proceeded more than a block when he became aware of the fact that he hadn't a penny in his clothes. This discovery disquieted him, and he half turned about to go back. He couldn't go back. He had no key.

"Pshaw! I won't need any money,"—and he started off toward Connecticut avenue. He dared not hail a car, and he would not have dared had he possessed the fare. Some one might recognize him. He walked briskly for ten minutes. The humor of the escapade appealed to him greatly, and he had all he could do to smother the frequent bursts of laughter which surged to his lips. He reached absent-mindedly for his cigar-case. No money, no cigars.

"That's bad. Without a cigar I'm likely to get nervous. Scraping off that beard made me forgetful. Jove! with these fleshings, I feel as self-conscious as an untried chorus girl. These togs can't be very warm in winter. Ha! that must be the embassy where all those lights are; carriages. Al-lons!"

To make positive, he stopped a pedestrian.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, touching his hat, "but will you be so kind as to inform me if yonder is the British embassy?"

"It is, my man," replied the gentleman.

"Thank you, sir."

And each passed on to his affairs. "Now for William; we must find William, or the joke will be on Robert."

He maneuvered his way through the congested thoroughfare, searching the faces of the grooms and footmen. He dodged hither and thither and was once brought to a halt by the mounted police.

"Here you! What d'ye mean by running around like this. Lost your carriage, hey? I've a mind to run ye in. Y' know the rules relat' to 'leavin' of yer box in times like these. Been takin' a sly nip, probably, an' they've sent yer hack down a peg. Get a gait on y', now."

Warburton laughed silently as he made for the sidewalk. The first man he plumped into was William—a very much worried William, too. Robert could have fallen on his neck for joy. All was plain sailing now.

"I'm very glad to see you, sir," said William. "I was afraid you could not get my clothes on, sir. I was getting a trifle worried, too. Here's the carriage number."

Warburton glanced hastily at it and stuffed it into a convenient pocket.

"It's 16 carriages up, sir; a bay and a gray. You can't miss them. The bay, being a saddle-horse, is a bit restive in the harness; but all you have to do is to touch him with the whip. And don't try to push ahead of your turn, or you will get into trouble with the police. They are very strict. And don't let them confuse you, sir. The numbers won't be in rotation. You'll hear 115, and the next moment 35, like as not. It's all according as to how the guests are leaving. Good luck to you, sir, and don't forget to explain it all thoroughly to Mr. Warburton, sir."

"Don't worry, William; we'll come out of this with colors flying."

"Very well, sir. I shall hang around till you are safely off,"—and William disappeared.

Warburton could occasionally hear the faint strain of music. From time to time the carriage-caller bawled out a number, and the carriage would roll up under the porte-cochere. Warburton concluded that it would be a good plan to hunt up his rig. His search did not last long. The bay and the gray stood only a little way from the gate. The box was vacant, and he climbed up and gathered the reins. He sat there for some time, longing intensely for a cigar, a good cigar, such as gentlemen smoked.

"Seventeen!" came hoarsely along on the wings of the night. "Number 17, and lively there!"

Warburton's pulse doubled its beat. His number.

"Skitt!" the bay and the gray started forward, took the half-circle and

stopped under the porte-cochere. Warburton recollected that a fashionable groom never turned his head unless spoken to; so he leveled his gaze at his horses' ears and waited.

But from the very corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of two women, one of whom was enveloped in a crimson cloak. He thrilled with exultation. What a joke it was! He felt the carriage list as the women stepped in. The door slammed to and the rare good joke was on the way.

"Off with you!" cried the pompous footman, with an imperious wave of the hand. "Number 99!"

"Ninety-nine! Ninety-nine!" bawled the carriage man.

Our Jehu turned into the avenue, holding a tolerable rein. He clucked and lightly touched the horses with the lash. This was true sport; this was humor, genuine, initiative, unforced. He could imagine the girls and their fright when he finally slowed down, opened the door, and kissed them both. Wouldn't they let out a yell, though? His plan was to drive furiously for half a dozen blocks, zigzag from one side of the street to the other, taking the corners sharply, and then make for Scott Circle.

Now, a lad of six can tell the difference between 17 and 71. But this astonishing Jehu of mine had been conspicuous as the worst mathematician and the best soldier in his class at West Point. No more did he remember that he was not in the wild west, and that here in the east there were laws prohibiting reckless driving.

He drove decently till he struck Dupont Circle. From here he turned into New Hampshire, thinking it to be Rhode Island. Mistake number two. He had studied the city map, but he was conscious of not knowing it as well as he should have known it, but, true to his nature, he trusted to luck.

Aside from all this, he forgot that a woman might appreciate this joke only when she heard it recounted. To live through it was altogether a different matter. In an episode like this, a woman's imagination, given the darkness such as usually fills a carriage at night, becomes a round of horrors. Every moment is freighted with death or disfigurement. Her nerves are like the taut strings of a harp in a wintry wind, ready to snap at any moment; and then, hysteria. With man the play, and only the play, is the thing.

Snap-crack! The surprised horses, sensitive and quick-tempered as all highly organized beings are, nearly leaped out of the harness. Never before had their flanks received a more unwarranted stroke of the lash. They reared and plunged and broke into a mad gallop, which was exactly what the rascal on the box desired. An expert horseman, he gauged the strength of the animals the moment they bolted, and he knew that they were his. Once the rubber-tired vehicle slid sideways on the wet asphalt, and he heard a stifled scream.

He laughed, and let forth a sounding "whoop," which nowise allayed the fright of the women inside the carriage. He wheeled into S street, scraping the curb as he did so. Pedestrians stopped and stared at him. A policeman waved his club helplessly, even hopelessly. On, on: to Warburton's mind this ride was as wild as that which the Bishop of Vannes took from Belle-Isle to Paris in the useless effort to save Fouquet from the wrath of Louis XIV, and to anticipate the pregnant discoveries of one D'Artagnan. The screams were renewed. A hand beat against the forward window and a muffled but wrathful voice called forth a command to stop. This voice was immediately drowned by another's prolonged scream. Our Jehu began to find all this very interesting, very exciting.

"I'll wager a dollar that Nan isn't doing that screaming. The Warburton's never cry out when they are frightened. Hang it!"—suddenly: "this street doesn't look familiar. I ought to have reached Scott Circle by this time. Ah, here's a broader street,"—going likety-clip into Vermont.

A glass went jingling to the pavement. "Oho! Nancy will be jumping out the next thing. This will never do." He began to draw in.

Hark! His trained trooper's ear heard other hoofs beating on the ironlike surface of the pavement. Worriedly he turned his head. Five blocks away there flashed under one of the arc-lights, only to disappear in the shadow again, two mounted policemen.

"By George! it looks as if the girls were going to have their fun too!" He laughed, but there was a nervous catch in his voice. He hadn't counted on any policeman taking part in the come. "Where the devil is Scott Circle, anyhow?"—frantically. He tugged at the reins. "Best draw up at the next corner. I'll be banged if I know where I am."

He braced himself, sawed the reins, and presently the frightened and somewhat wearied horses slowed down to a trot. This he finally brought to a walk. One more pull, and they came to a stand. It would be hard to say which breathed the heaviest, the man or the horses. Warburton leaped from the box, opened the door and waited. He recognized the necessity of finishing the play before the mounted police arrived on the scene.

There was a commotion inside the carriage, then a woman in a crimson cloak stepped (no, jumped!) out. Mr.



"GOOD LORD!"

Robert threw his arms around her and kissed her cheek.

"You . . . vile . . . wretch!" Warburton sprang back, his hands applied to his stinging face.

"You drunken wretch, how dare you!"

"Nan, it's only I—" he stammered. "Nan!" exclaimed the young woman, as her companion joined her. The light from the corner disclosed the speaker's wrathful features, disdainful lips, palpitating nostrils, eyes darting terrible glances. "Nan! Do you think, ruffian, that you are driving serving maids?"

"Good Lord!" Warburton stepped back speechless, benumbed, terror-struck still farther; stepped back speechless, benumbed, terror-struck. The woman he was gazing at was anybody in the world but his sister Nancy!

CHAPTER VII.

A POLICE AFFAIR.

"Officers, arrest this fellow!" commanded the young woman. Her gesture was Didoesque in its wrath.

"That we will, ma'am!" cried one of the policemen, flinging himself from his horse. "So it's you, me gay buck? Thirty days for you, an' mebbe more. I didn't like yer looks from th' start. You're working some kind of a trick. What complaint, ma'am?"

"Drunkness and abduction,"—rubbing the burning spot on her cheek.

"That'll be rather serious. Ye'll have to appear against him in th' mornin', ma'am."

"I certainly shall do so." She promptly gave her name, address and telephone number.

"Bill, you drive th' ladies home an' I'll see this bucko to th' station. Here, you!"—to Warburton, who was still dumb with astonishment at the extraordinary denouement to his innocent joke. "Git on that horse, an' lively, or, or, I'll rap ye with th' club."

"It's all a mistake, officer—" "Close yer face and git on that horse. Y' can tell th' fudge all that in th' mornin'. I ain't got no time t' listen. Bill, report just as soon as ye see th' ladies home. Now, off with y'." Th' ladies'll be wanting somethin' t' quiet their nerves. Git on that horse, me frisky groom; hustle!" Warburton mechanically climbed into the saddle. It never occurred to him to parley, to say that he couldn't ride a horse. The inventive cells of his usually fertile brain lay passive. "Now," went on the officer, mounting his own nag, "will ye go quietly? If ye don't I'll plug ye in th' leg with a chunk o' lead. I won't stan' no nonsense."

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Warburton, with a desperate effort to collect his energies. "Lock ye up; mebbe throw a pail of water on that overheated cocoanut of yours."

"But if you'll only let me explain to you! It's all a joke; I got the wrong carriage—" "Marines, marines! D'ye think I was born yesterday? Ye wanted th' ladies' sparklers, or I'm a doughhead." The police are the same all over the world; the original idea sticks to them, and truth in voice or presence is but a sign of deeper cunning and villainy. "Anyhow, ye can't turn around Washington like ye do in England, me cockney. Ye can't drive more'n a hundred miles an hour on these pavements."

"But, I tell you—" Warburton, realizing where his escapade was about to lead him, grew desperate. The ignominy of it! He would be the laughing-stock of the town on the morrow. The papers would team with it. "You'll find that you are making a great mistake. If you will only take me to Scott Circle—"

"Where ye have a pal with a gun, eh? Git ahead!" and the two made off toward the west.

Once or twice the officer found himself admiring the easy seat of his prisoner; and if the horse had been anything but a trained animal, he would have worried some regarding the ultimate arrival at the third precinct.

Half a dozen times Warburton was of a mind to make a bolt for it, but he did not dare trust the horse or his knowledge of the streets. He had already two counts against him, disorderly conduct and abduction, and he had no desire to add uselessly a third, that of resisting an officer, which seems the greatest possible crime a man can commit and escape hanging. Oh, for a mettlesome nag! There would be no police-station for him, then. Police-station! Heavens, what should he do? His brother, his sister; their dismay, their shame; not counting that he himself would be laughed at from one end of the continent to the other. What an ass he had made of himself! He wondered how much money it would take to clear himself and at the same moment recollected that he hadn't a cent in his clothes. A sweat of terror moistened his brow.

(To Be Continued.)

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IMMUNITY BOUGHT FOR KING EDWARD

Report that England Has Truce With Anarchists.

Plots of Regicides Are Hatched in London and Executed in Capitals of Europe.

WHY THEY HATE ALFONSO

London, England, June 7.—The odious crime at Madrid has raised again the practical problem how shall society protect itself against its most venomous enemies, the anarchists?

Europe has long complained that the spread of anarchism and its virtual immunity is due to the free asylum offered even to its most vicious members by Great Britain. It was the British government which vetoed the proposal for concerted action for protection against this danger a few years ago by declining to take part in an international conference on the subject. It has therefore been said, and there is some truth in the allegation, that Great Britain has purchased immunity for its royal family and other authorities by making a tacit bargain with the most despicable criminals that infest the earth.

This is a fact. The loud-mouthed creatures who openly brag of their murderous intentions in Soho and outer London districts fully understand that they will be driven out of the country the moment they lift a hand against a British official. Now they have attempted to kill an English princess. They have been making the matter worse the last day or two by apologizing for "the necessity," and seriously arguing like a lawyer in court that Ena ceased to be an English princess when she became queen of Spain.

Plots Hatched in London.

The anarchists assume, therefore, that they will be allowed to continue to plot assassinations in London at their leisure and they brag openly that no less than twenty of their number went from here to Madrid for the purpose of aiding in the murder of the king of Spain.

Scotland Yard denies that the Madrid plot was concocted in London cannot be accepted as evidence. It was fully known here for several days before the royal wedding that a plot was on foot to assassinate King Alfonso on his wedding day.

The question now pressing for solution is, what will be the future policy of the British authorities towards the avowed conspirators against human life who make their headquarters in this country? Of course, the venomous crew can be suppressed only by laws so drastic as to violate the principles of liberty which Englishmen hold so dear. The expulsion of the anarchists from England or their imprisonment, say as lunatics, would incite most determined reprisals by many unknown members of the infernal fraternity and the personal danger of King Edward would become for the time being greater than that of any other sovereign.

This selfish view furnishes no answer to the emphatic continental protest that England has no right to grant facilities for murder abroad in order to protect herself against the common peril. This complaint is becoming so insistent and its reasonableness so obvious that the government probably can be compelled to assent at least to a general consultation.

It would be necessary for the United States to play a prominent part in such a conference, for the expulsion of anarchists from London would drive them across the Atlantic. Their numbers are large. There are no less than ten avowed anarchist clubs in London and the membership of one of them numbers a thousand.

Why Anarchists Hate Alfonso.

Anarchists in London who pretend to know all about the campaign against King Alfonso declare he is a victim of an implacable anarchist vendetta due to the treatment of suspects in Barcelona several years ago. This was known at the time as the "horrors of Monjuich"—that is, barbarous treatment in the fortress of that name was inflicted indiscriminately on all who were arrested in connection with some of the early anarchist risings in Barcelona. These suspects were subjected to the rack and other forms of torture in order to extort confessions. Several emerged maimed for life. One English journal printed the detailed narratives of the released men, several of whom were innocent and were not anarchists at all. French pamphlets on the subject were circulated throughout Europe and the deeds were laid to the charge of the Spanish government. Alfonso then was a child and had not the faintest responsibility,

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but the Catalan can be as revengeful as the Corsican and ever since the young king assumed power he has been pursued by the vendetta. One may trace each of the four attempts on Alfonso's life since 1902 to this cause. He has been four times sentenced to death by the anarchists. The anarchists in London cynically affirm that he now will be tried and condemned for a fifth time.

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